2/5/72

Dr. John K. Lattimer
Department of Urology
College of Physicians and Surgeons of
Columbia University
New York, N.Y. 10032

Dear Dr. Lattimer,

Your delayed letter of January 28 says only, "The only way I can answer your many questions will be by sending you reprints, so that the record will be kept straight. I will do this as soon as they become available, which will,incidentally, be quite a while."

In every sense this is unacceptable, where it is not untrue. I strongly encourage you to think this through and to be aware of the responsibilities and liabilities you assumed in making application to see the material in question, in seeing it, and in rushing into print with an inadequate if not false representation of it. You simply do not own an exclusive on this, nor can you with honor let the matter rest in refusing to ask legitimate questions, all of which flow from what you have done. You are in the position of seeking to exert an exclusive ownership of public material and of exploiting the names of the late President and his family for personal profit, which includes professional reputation and related considerations. And your position is inconistent with your practise, which has been to rush before TV cameras, radio microphones and reporters none of whom were in a position to question you in any meaningful way, none having the requisite technical background or having done the required research. The net result is that you limited what you chose to say to that which addresses your earlier writings in which you present only your person preconceptions and I think it is fair to say prejudices. To put this is a blunt way, all you did is come out of seeing this material and say that what you had earlier said is the one true account and thus you are a great and all-seeing guy. You did this so transparently that in no account I have seen or heard have you mentioned the cause of death, the end result of any autopsy examination.

Your letters begin with untruth, that "the only way~~x~~ I can answer" my questions is by sending me a reprint of whatever you may write and publish, if you ever publish anything, after it is published. This is consistent with our earlier correspondence, long before this, where you also failed to answer any questions. It is your election, and about that perhaps I can do nothing, but it simply isn't true that you cannot respond to serious questions now. And it makes obvious the attempt to exert a personal and exclusive copyright on what under the law at least in part is "public information" and what in fact is the Kennedy name.

It is likewise false that by, if ever, sending me a copyrighted reprint, by that means "the record will be kept straight". The fact is quite the contrary. That is the one way within your control by which you can see to it that the record is not kept straight. That is the one way by which you can continue to avoid what you find unpleasant or uncongenial and to insist upon restricting yourself to what little you chose to say. What I am asking of you is what I want to know, what I want to address in my writing, not what you chose to talk about. This is your attempt at world censorship. I find it intolerable and, if you do not respond by the time I have completed this writing, will address it in precisely these terms. You have given me no alternative.

Among the questions I, like any other serious writer, will have to ask myself is how you can find time for radio talk shows, TV and printed-press interviews, all designed to create for you an enormous amount of personal publicity, all of a non-permanentx nature except as you benefit personally from this publicity you have generated, while you will not take the time to answer proper and relevant questions for a permanent record, a book. Here the obvious answer is that you have neither the knowledge nor the courage to face one who does have some knowledge of fact and has some familiarity with your own writing and what you seem to think is your research.

Any reading of the questions I sent you shows they are designed to elicit what you have and have not done, said and understood, and how. This is more than legitimate inquiry, it is the minimum essential of any responsible writing. Writers do not owe you sycophancy, but by what you have done on such a subject as this you do owe writers answers, something more than self-seeking publicity where you select media and means that do not permit any kind of real inquiry.

One of the things I asked of you is the headlines you generated around the world, how pictures and X-rays can show who fired what shots. You know as well as I do that this is totally and completely impossible, yet on this falsehood you got yourself international headlines. I submit it is because the questions catch you up only that you refuse to answer them and give a false reason for not answering. If I am wrong, your answering of the question can prove it. If you elect not to answer, what would you believe were our positions reversed?

I will not argue with you. I have asked questions. If you do not respond I will so record, as my own integrity and the integrity of my work, if not more, the national interest and integrity require of me.

There is one thing you can do without waiting until, if ever, you further commit yourself to a record on which you will have to stake your professional reputation, a development I really do not anticipate, not now. You can send me reprints of everything you have published on assassinations. In addition to the JAMA 10/24/66 and "International Surgery articles, I have your 2/14/66 speech on what you style the similarities in the assassinations of the assassins. Also, any changes you may later have made in them, if any, or any published correspondence on these or other writings, if any. I do not consider that I have the right to request unpublished correspondence, but should you have no reluctance to provide it for my consideration, I would welcome it. My purpose is to be as certain as possible that I have studied all you have said and written on this subject, a purpose I would expect a serious and confident scholar to appreciate.

For your own sake and for other interests, I urged deep introspection upon you.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg